SPORT

MARSEILLE: Liverpool's Cody Gakpo (C) scores past Olympique de Marseille goalkeeper Geronimo Rulli during their Champions League match at the Orange Velodrome.—Reuters

Kane leads Bayern into last 16 as Premier League trio make charge

PARIS: Harry Kane missed a penalty but scored twice to lead Bayern Munich to a 2-0 win against Union Saint-Gilloise and into the Champions League last 16 on Wednesday, while Premier League teams powered ahead with five of England's top flight clubs in position to advance.

Arsenal top the standings and have already secured their place in the next round, while wins for Liverpool, Newcastle United and saw them move into the top eight automatic qualifying positions with one game of the league phase to go.

Tottenham Hotspur are fifth, with Manchester City the only English team in the playoff positions going into next week's matches.

"Let's make sure we're in the top eight. We've put ourselves in a good position, but that's for next week," Liverpool captain Virgil van Dijk said after Arne Slot's side extended their unbeaten run to 13 matches and moved to fourth with a 3-0 win at Olympique de Marseille.

Newcastle beat PSV Eindhoven by the same score and Chelsea entered the top eight thanks to a 1-0 triumph against Cypriot minnows Pafos.

Bayern are second and joined Arsenal in guaranteeing a top-eight finish with a game to spare, and therefore a last-16 spot.

Barcelona are in ninth place after a 4-2 win at Slavia Prague and risk having to go through the playoffs to advance.

But there is much to play for in the final round of league phase games with just three points separating third-placed Real Madrid and Juventus in 15th.

The top eight qualify directly to the round of 16. Teams placed from nine to 24 enter a two-legged playoff to advance.

All 18 matches in the final round of games will be played simultaneously next Wednesday, January 28, and drama awaits.

While the remaining six automatic qualification spots are still up for grabs, just two points separate the last of the playoff places and Ajax, who are 32nd in the standings.

One standout game sees Italian champions Napoli host Chelsea. Napoli are 25th — one place below the playoffs. It also means a reunion for Napoli coach Antonio Conte and his former club Chelsea.

"It's a massive game. For Napoli as well. They need to win to stay in the competition; we need to win to be in the top eight," Chelsea coach Liam Rosenior said. "It's going to be a great game against a massive club, with a great manager."

Defending champions Paris St Germain host Newcastle and dropped points for either team could see them fall into the playoffs.

City's home game against Galatasaray also has much riding on it if the 2023 European champions are to avoid the danger of the playoffs.

Jose Mourinho needs a win at his former club Real Madrid to give Benfica any chance of making the playoffs.

Bayern saw off Belgian champions Union at the Allianz Arena as Kane scored goals number 35 and 36 in a remarkable season, but was left to rue missing out on a fourth hat-trick of the season when his second-half penalty struck the crossbar.

The England captain nudged a corner from Michael Olise into the net in the 52nd to open the scoring, then won and converted a penalty on 55 minutes after being fouled by Kjell Scherpen.

However, the game ended on a bitter note. Defender Minjae Kim was sent off in the 63rd after receiving a second yellow card, while Kane missed a penalty in the 81st.

"Last year, we didn't achieve that [direct qualification to the last 16]. This was an important win," Kane told DAZN. "We scored at the right times, were a bit unlucky with the red card but even after that when we went down to 10 men we controlled the game well and earned the three points."

LIVERPOOL, NEWCASTLE, CHELSEA WIN

Liverpool topped the league phase last year — only to be eliminated by PSG in the round of 16.

Slot's team have made harder work of it this time around, but victory in Marseille leaves the Premier League champions in a strong position going into their final game at home to Qarabag.

Mohamed Salah made his first appearance for his club since returning from the Africa Cup of Nations, but he was not among the scorers.

Instead it was Dominik Szoboszlai who got the breakthrough just before half-time with a clever free-kick that went under the wall.

Hugo Ekitike hit the bar before the second goal arrived on 72 minutes when Jeremie Frimpong's ball into the middle went in off goalkeeper Geronimo Rulli and Cody Gakpo sealed the win in stoppage time.

Newcastle United cruised past PSV at St James' Park after Yoane Wissa got an early opener, Anthony Gordon made it two on the half-hour and Harvey Barnes then fired in the third on 65 minutes.

Chelsea edged out stubborn Pafos at Stamford Bridge thanks to a Moises Caicedo header in the 78th minute — as new coach Rosenior enjoyed a win in his first Champions League game.

BARCA OVERCOME EARLY SCARE

Fermin Lopez scored twice as Barca fought back to beat Slavia, with a stunning long-range effort the pick of his goals.

Vasil Kusej stunned Barca as he gave Slavia the lead in the 10th. Michal Sadilek's corner was glanced on across the face of the goal and Kusej put the ball over the line.

But Lopez scored a brace in the 34th and 42nd, thanks to assists from Frenkie de Jong and Pedri, to turn things around for the Spanish champions, only for the unlucky Robert Lewandowski to put through his own net and make it 2-2 at the interval.

Substitute Dan Olmo curled into the top corner to put Barca in front again in the 63rd before Lewandowski redeemed himself with a goal in the 71st to put the game to bed.

"It wasn't easy to play today, it was too cold and Slavia played very well with transitions, dangerous balls. We improved a lot in the second half," coach Hansi Flick said.

Atletico Madrid drew 1-1 away to Galatasaray in Istanbul, with Giuliano Simeone putting the visitors ahead early on only for a Marcos Llorente own goal to restore parity.

MCKENNIE ON TARGET

Juve continued their Champions League recovery with a third straight European win, beating Benfica 2-0 thanks to second-half goals by Khephren Thuram and Weston McKennie, who scored for the third time this season.

Juve are 15th and guaranteed to at least make the playoffs.

TURIN: Juventus' Khephren Thuram-Ulien (C) celebrates after scoring with team-mates Weston McKennie (L) and Jonathan David during their match against Benfica at the Allianz Stadium.—AFP

Vangelis Pavlidis missed a penalty in spectacular fashion for Benfica, and Mourinho's side now look set to be eliminated.

Atalanta are 13th after seeing their top-eight hopes hit as they lost 3-2 at home to Athletic Bilbao, with the Basque side reviving their hopes of making the play-off round.

Gianluca Scamacca headed Atalanta in front but Gorka Guruzeta equalised before the break and Nico Serrano and Robert Navarro added further goals in the second half. Nikola Krstovic then pulled one back late on.

FRANKFURT ELIMINATED

Surprise package Qarabag are on course to make the play-offs after beating Eintracht Frankfurt 3-2 in Baku.

Colombian Camilo Duran scored twice for the home side either side of a Can Uzun effort and a Fares Chaibi penalty. Bahlul Mustafazade then won it for the Azeri club in injury time, which also confirmed Frankfurt's elimination.

With one game left, Frankfurt can't reach the top 24 anymore. Qarabag, meanwhile, are 18th.—Agencies

Rain mars second day of play in President's Trophy fifth round

KARACHI: The second day of the fifth round of the President's Trophy was badly affected by rain as play was called off early at the SBP Sports Complex, KCCA Stadium and UBL Sports Complex, while action was only possible for the final hour at the National Bank Stadium on Thursday.

At the National Bank Stadium, Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) added 144 runs to their overnight 308-4 before being bowled out for 452 in 122.3 overs, with only 45.3 overs possible in the day.

Test pacer Mir Hamza continued his fine form by claiming his 33rd first-class five-wicket haul — and his third in the last three matches — returning figures of 5-67 in 27.3 overs.

Resuming on 110, Mubasir Khan fell for 129 off 206 balls, hitting 14 fours, bringing an end to a superb fifth-wicket stand of 249 with Mohammad Awais Zafar. Awais narrowly missed his eighth first-class century, falling for 98 off 177 balls, which included 11 fours and two sixes.

Saifullah Bangash (47 off 81 balls, seven fours) and Sajid Khan (30 off 36 balls, four fours) provided useful late-order support. For Ghani Glass, Khurram Shahzad, Noman Ali, Ali Shabbir and Ali Razzaq picked up one wicket each alongside Hamza's five-for.

In reply, Ghani Glass reached 37-2 in nine overs, with Shehzad Gul removing both openers.

At the UBL Sports Complex, only 41.2 overs were bowled as Khan Research Laboratories (KRL) reached 88-4 in 26.1 overs in response to Pakistan Television's 414 all out in 102.1 overs. Ali Usman and Amad Butt took two wickets apiece for PTV.

Imran Rafiq (30 not out off 44 balls, six fours) and Sarmad Bhatti (12 not out off 25 balls, two fours) were at the crease after KRL lost four wickets for 52 runs.

Earlier, Mohammad Taha completed his third first-class century, scoring 119 off 209 balls with 13 fours and two sixes, after resuming on 82 not out. Number 10 Musa Khan added 23 of the 66 runs PTV managed on the second morning.

KRL pacer Arshad Iqbal claimed his third first-class five-wicket haul, finishing with figures of 5-100, supported by Mohammad Hamza (3-106) and Aqib Liaqat (2-73).

At the SBP Sports Complex, only 35 overs were possible between Sahir Associates and State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) before rain intervened. SBP were 73-1 in at stumps, still trailing by 167 runs, with Abdullah Fazal (36 not out off 91 balls, five fours) and Mohammad Huraira (14, three fours) batting. Skipper Hasan Raza was dismissed for 16.

Earlier, Sahir Associates were dismissed for 240 in 89 overs, having lost their last three wickets for 11 runs after resuming on 229-7.

Meanwhile, at the KCCA Stadium, Wapda moved 44 runs ahead of Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) after extending their overnight 56-2 to 203-7 in 71.2 overs before rain forced an early close.

Mohammad Ammar anchored the innings with a resolute 74 off 142 balls, including 10 fours. However, OGDCL struck at regular intervals as Sharoon Siraj (31), Ayaz Tasawar (24) and Khalid Usman (24) failed to convert their starts.

Spinners Asif Afridi and Jawad Ali took three wickets each, while Mohammad Amir Khan claimed one.—Sports Reporter

Real Madrid football's biggest earners

MANCHESTER: Real Madrid remained the biggest-earning club in world football during the 2024-25 season while Liverpool for the first time generated the most revenues in the Premier League, according to an annual financial list published on Thursday.

The Spanish club topped Deloitte's Football Money League with 1.16 billion euros of revenue despite not winning either LaLiga or the Champions League. The only club to make more than $1 billion in the past two seasons, Real benefited in 2024-25 from a whopping 23% rise in commercial revenue — driven by merchandise and corporate partners — to 594 million euros, the Deloitte figures showed.

Perennial rivals and reigning LaLiga champions Barcelona were the second highest earners with 975 million euros. Bundesliga champions Bayern Munich ranked third with 861 million euros, ahead of Champions League winners Paris St-Germain on 837 million euros.

Liverpool's fifth place in the global money list, with 836 million euros of revenues from the season they won the Premier League, was the strongest performance of any English club in the 29-year history of the rankings. Manchester City dropped to sixth with 829 million euros, followed by Arsenal on 822 million.

Manchester United, who finished a lowly 15th in the Premier League last season, fell from fourth to eighth in revenues with 793 million euros — their lowest-ever position in the Money League.

Deloitte noted that United's revenue outlook for the current season will worsen due to their absence from European competition and early exits from the FA Cup and League Cup.

Six Premier League sides made the global top 10, with Tottenham ninth on 673 million euros and Chelsea 10th on 584 million.

Overall, revenue for the top 20 clubs rose 11% to a record 12.4 billion euros. Commercial income increased to 5.3 billion euros, driven by expanded stadium usage on non-match days, rising sponsorship deals and improved retail operations.—Reuters

Dzeko joins Schalke on six-month deal

BERLIN: Veteran striker Edin Dzeko has signed with Bundesliga 2 side Schalke until the end of the season, the German club announced on Thursday.

The Bosnia and Herzegovina captain has been brought in to boost Schalke's promotion hopes amid a flagging attack.

Schalke are four points clear at the top of the Bundesliga 2 table but have scored just 22 goals in 18 games — only three teams in the league have scored fewer.

Former Manchester City and Inter Milan forward Dzeko, 39, joins from Serie A side Fiorentina, where he had played a bit-part role this season.

"Since their initial interest, I've been following the club and have watched several Schalke games," Dzeko said in a statement, adding that "it's very impressive how the team has developed this season after some difficult years."

Seven-time German champions, although not since 1958, Schalke have been relegated twice in the past decade, most recently at the end of the 2022-23 season.

A title-winner with VfL Wolfsburg in 2009, Dzeko scored 85 goals in 142 matches in Germany and was the Bundesliga's top scorer in 2010 before moving to City, where he won two Premier League titles.—AFP

UAE Team Emirates XRG's Australian rider Jay Vine (L) celebrates after winning the second stage of the Tour Down Under as his team-mate Jhonatan Narvaez of Ecuador reacts on Thursday.—AFP

Vine, Narvaez complete one-two for UAE Team Emirates XRG

ADELAIDE: Former winner Jay Vine and defending champion Jhonatan Narvaez completed a one-two for UAE Team Emirates XRG to dominate the second stage of the Tour Down Under near Adelaide on Thursday.

Australia's Vine, the 2023 winner, powered up the Corkscrew Hill the second time with Ecuador's Narvaez hanging in on his wheel to open up a race-winning break and scatter their rivals for an untroubled sprint into the Uraidla finish.

Such was Vine's dominance that Narvaez clapped him in tribute as they crossed the finish line of the 148.1km stage with Swiss champion Mauro Schmid (Team Jayco AlUla) third, 58 seconds adrift of the pair.

Vine took the lead in the race general classification by six seconds from Narvaez with Schmid third 1min 5sec behind the leader.

"It's been on my mind since the last time I wore the ochre leader's jersey, it's so incredible to win on such a hard stage," Vine said.

"We have such a strong position now with me and Jonny [Narvaez] and being led out by Adam Yates is pretty incredible as well."

Narvaez, who appeared to be gasping to keep up with Vine on the demanding final Corkscrew climb, paid tribute to his teammate.

"Jay was really strong, I was just a passenger on his wheel on the climb," he said.

"He prepared really well for this race and we are happy to get the victory and, of course, we are looking to win the GC."

It was a huge statement by the powerful UAE team with three stages left in the UCI World Tour season opener.

It was the first time in the race's 26 years that a men's stage had featured two Corkscrew Hill climbs.

With 700 metres left up the steep 2.6km ascent Vine blasted clear and Narvaez was the only rider who could go with him as their attack scattered the peloton.

Denmark's Tobias Lund Andresen, the race leader after stage one, was dropped on the last climb of the Corkscrew and limped home in 82nd place.—AFP